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ABSTRACT

This document is the eleventh in a series of 12 early childhood program descriptions compiled by the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development. The program described here is the Florida Parent Education program developed by Ira Gordon of the Institute for Development of Human Resources at the University of Florida in Gainesville. The Florida Parent Education Program is a Follow Through model which serves children in grades K-3. The major thrust of the program is to help parents acquire some home teaching competencies that will improve their children's intellectual behavior, self-esteem, and motivation. The Florida program hires and trains community people to work as parent educators who in turn make weekly home visits to teach parents skills to use at home with their children. Included in the program description are brief outlines of: (1) goals and objectives, (2) content and materials, (3) classroom activities, (4) parent involvement, (5) professional and paraprofessional training, (6) administrative requirements and costs, (7) program development and evaluation, and (8) program history and present (1971) status. (JMB)

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Early Childhood
Information Unit
November, 1971

Program Summary

Florida Parent Education Program

Project Director: Ira J. Gordon
Institute for Development of Human Resources
University of Florida
Gainesville, Florida 32601

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GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

The Florida Parent Education Program is a Follow Through (kindergarten through third grade) model, developed by Ira Gordon of the Institute for Development of Human Resources, University of Florida at Gainesville. The model is based on the premise that parental behavior, such as maternal teaching behavior, and the quality and amount of verbal stimulation, have a strong influence on the intellectual and personal development of the child. Thus the major thrust of the program is to educate parents to use skills that will improve their children's intellectual behavior, self-esteem, and motivation. The developers believe that parents can help their children achieve these goals if they themselves can acquire some teaching competencies and self-assurance in their ability to effect change. To accomplish this, the Florida program hires and trains community people to work as parent educators who in turn make weekly home visits to teach parents skills to use at home with their children.

CONTENT AND MATERIALS:

The Florida Parent Education Model is still at the developmental stage. Many of the learning activities are being developed and tested with the help of parents, parent educators, teachers and the program staff. These learning activities are designed to reflect the child's family life style, value system, and goals. Parents are encouraged to design learning activities on their own using common household items. Often these parent-originated activities are later used in the classroom.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

During the weekly home visits, the parent educator demonstrates and teaches the parent tasks which have been devised in school to improve the child's intellectual abilities and social and personal growth. Parent educators help parents to estimate the ability of their children, understand the purpose of each learning task, and teach it to their children. The parent educators spend half of their time in the classroom as teaching aides. They become the liaison agents between the home and the school.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT:

Parents are an integral part of the Florida program. They are involved in educating their own children at home, are encouraged to take part in designing learning tasks, may participate as parent volunteers in the classroom, may be trained as parent educators, and may be active as members of the Policy Advisory Committee, an advisory body to the model consisting of parents in the community.

PROFESSIONAL AND PARAPROFESSIONAL TRAINING:

Pre- and inservice training are provided for teachers and parent educators alike. Preservice training is conducted furing a summer workshop at the University of Florida as well as at a one-week workshop in the local community. Inservice training involves two days a month of on-site consultation provided by the program staff. During these two days, the consultant meets with the Policy Advisory Committee, conducts inservice workshops with local teachers and parent educators, and reviews videotapes of classroom and home sessions. After each visit, the consultant reports on findings and recommendations to the teachers and parent educators and to the program staff in Florida.

ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS AND COST:

Usually a classroom is staffed with a certified teacher, two parent educators and other parent volunteers. However, since the model is tailored to meet the needs of each participating community, schools that wish to use the Florida Parent Education Model should contact Ira Gordon at the Institute for all implementation requirements and related costs.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION:

Success of the program is measured on the basis of its efforts to increase parental competency and self-esteem, improve children's intellectual abilities and self-image, and provide the schools with the capacity for

institutional change. A number of instruments aimed at measuring the effectiveness of components of the program are being developed and tested. Many of the instruments are of the observation and progress report variety rather than standardized tests.

The Florida Parent Education Model grew out of several infant stimulation projects directed by Ira Gordon since 1966. In these early studies, paraprofessionals were trained to visit homes and teach parents to provide stimulation for their three-month to 24-month-old children. Results from these studies showed that children exposed to the parent stimulation obtained superior scores on infant mental developmental scales compared with children not included in the study, and that mothers involved in the project showed more self-confidence in their abilities than they did before they entered the project. The developers feel that they have demonstrated a workable scheme of parent education using paraprofessionals as teachers of parents in their own homes.

PROGRAM HISTORY AND PRESENT STATUS:

During the 1968-1969 school year, The Parent Education Model became a Follow Through model for children from kindergarten to third grade. The model is presently being implemented in 11 communities throughout the country. Plans are being made to use the approach to establish day care services.